

Urge Senate to Reauthorize Essential Resources to Fire Departments in Arizona

SCOTTSDALE -U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today joined valley firefighters at Indian Steele Park to urge the Senate to pass critical legislation to reauthorize and provide important resources to fire departments in Arizona and across the country.

"At a time when our economy is hurting and cities and towns are struggling with their budgets, it is crucial that we cut wasteful spending in order to ensure proper resources that maintain our vital safety and security priorities," said Mitchell. "We depend on firefighters every day. But firefighters also depend on us to make sure that they have the equipment and the training they need to do their job. Without those tools, we put them and all of us at unnecessary risk and I urge the Senate to pass this bill immediately."

Mitchell has introduced H.R. 3791, The ***Fire Grants Reauthorization*** Act Of 2009, which would reauthorize two key grant programs made available to local fire departments to purchase response equipment, training, and fire trucks. They provide critical resources to fire departments in Arizona and across the country and could help departments like Phoenix that are facing a budget crunch and layoffs. Specifically, the bill reauthorizes the Assistance to Firefighters Grants program-or AFG-and the Staffing for Adequate Safety and Emergency Response program-or SAFER.

"This bill would fund the grants that help us keep people safe," said Tim Hill, President of the Professional Firefighters of Arizona. "From funding for new equipment and trucks to recruitment and hiring of more firefighters to fire prevention and safety programs, this bill reaches every aspect of the job we do as firefighters. We are grateful of the work Congressman Mitchell has done on our behalf and thank him for his strong and continued support of firefighters."

Mitchell's bill would authorize increased funding for AFG and SAFER in order to help more fire departments. It would also provide a waiver for departments in distressed economic situations that would otherwise not qualify for these grants due to cuts to staffing. Both of these changes

could help departments like Phoenix and others in Arizona facing staff, resource and budget shortages.

The bill has already passed the House of Representatives by an overwhelming bipartisan margin of 395 to 31 and is pending before the Senate. Today, Mitchell wrote a letter to Senate Majority leader Harry Reid urging him to bring this bill to the floor of a Senate.